THE INKDROP

Vol.1

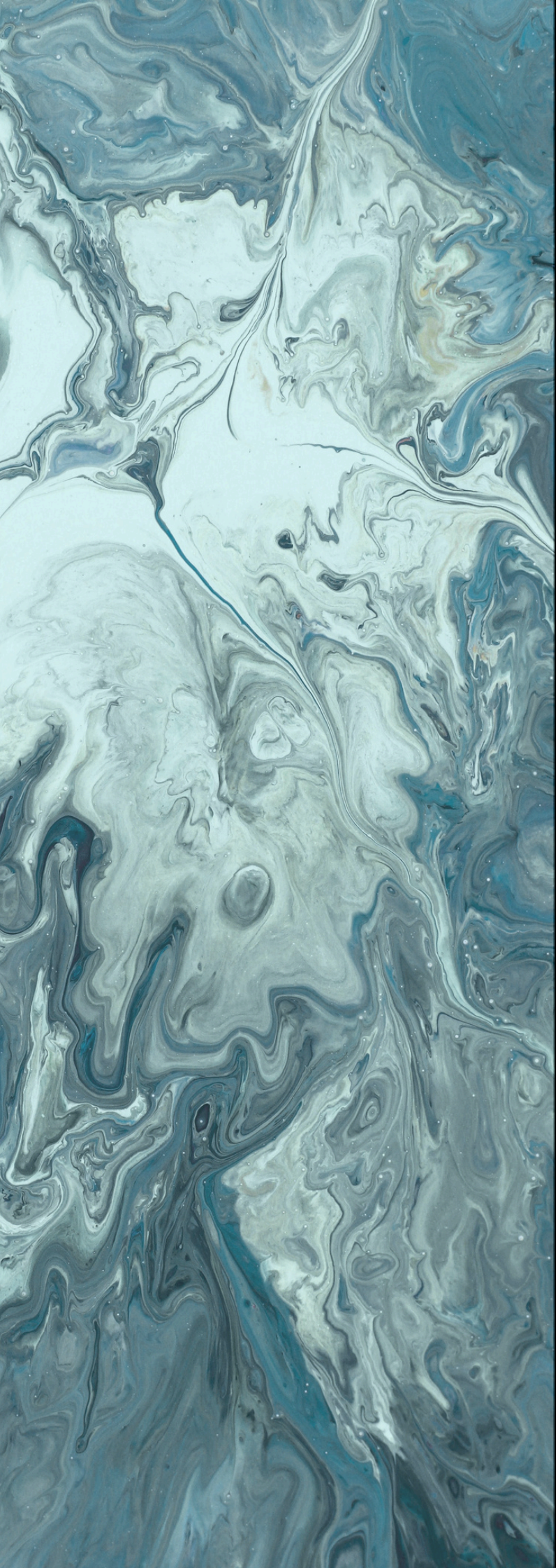
STUDENTS' ORGANISATION OF UNITED LITTÉRATEUR

THE SOUL BECOMES DYED WITH THE COLOUR OF ITS THOUGHTS
~MARCUS AURELIUS

THE INKDROP

VOLUME 1

STUDENTS' ORGANISATION OF UNITED LITTÉRATEUR



HEAD OF ORGANISATION
Shubh Kachhwaha

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE
Suyash Jha
Ananya Yadav
Adarsh Sahu

DIGITAL TEAM
Aarush Agrawal
Anany Sharma

INTERIOR DESIGNING
Aiza Khan

EDITORIAL ADVISOR
Mouly Bajpai

Copyright © 2026 by Students' Organisation of United Littérateur

Copyright of individual works is maintained by the respective writers.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without prior written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in reviews.

CONTACT
Official Email:
soul.litterateurs@gmail.com
For Inquiry:
sakshi.soullitterateurs@gmail.com
Editorial Committee:
editorialboard.soul@gmail.com
soul3.com

In this issue

3 LETTER FROM FOUNDER

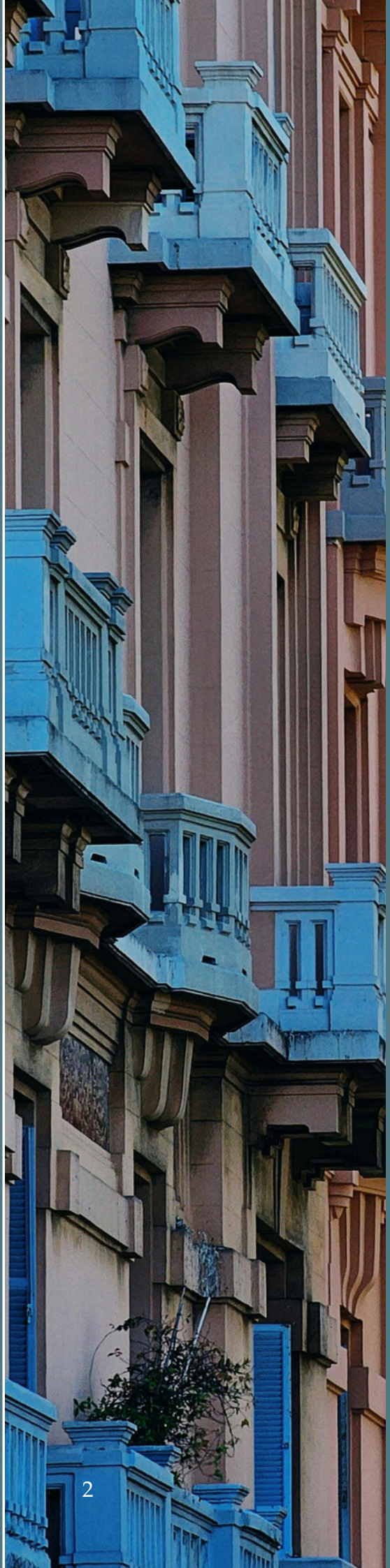
4 EDITORIAL COMMITTEE ADDRESS

7 POETRIES

- Crimson
- Hearth of my Soul
- Still Alone
- Bruised Hope
- Julie
- Nothing noway
- The storms in my eyes
- Feeling Something
- Where have I come?
- That Kinda Beauty
- A Loud Silence
- A silent fire
- My soul a treachery of words
- The psyche ward
- The Ship at the Sea
- The World Between Pages
- What is love

26 REVIEWS

- The War of Art by Steven Pressfield
- Before the coffee gets cold by Toshikazu Kawaguchi



PROSES 28

- The missing book in the set by Divya Yadav
- Deonar Dumping Ground: Innocents in the Shadow of Asia's Largest Landfill by Adarsh Sahu
- A GenZ's approach to marriage! By Achintya Prajapati
- The Unseen by Suyash Jha
- Operation Brainrot. The Final Ending by Rishiraj Choubey

EXPERTS' ADDRESS 48

FOUNDER'S ADDRESS

There is something quietly powerful about an inkdrop.

It does not announce itself loudly. It does not demand attention. Yet, the moment it touches paper, it begins to spread, forming shapes, telling stories, leaving a mark that cannot be undone. Inkdrop Magazine was born from that very idea: that even the smallest expression, when honest, has the power to ripple outward and create meaning.

I have always dreamt of building a platform where young literary voices can express themselves without pressure or fear. Because literature is not just an art, it is the very foundation upon which societies are built. It is, and always will be, a mirror to the world we live in.

When we founded the Students' Organisation of United Littérateurs (SOUL), the vision was never limited to creating just another literary platform. It was about building a space where voices are not filtered by perfection, but celebrated for their authenticity. A space where young writers are not asked to fit into predefined molds, but are encouraged to explore, question, and redefine.

To every writer who contributed: thank you for trusting this space with your voice.
To every reader who holds this magazine: you are now a part of this journey.

-Shubh Kachhwaha

EDITORIAL BOARD

Ink is honest when voices are not. SOUL's Editorial Page stands as a quiet rebellion where thoughts are unfiltered, identities unmasked, and words refuse to kneel. This is not merely a page; it is a threshold. Between silence and speech. Between who you are and who you dare to be.

We don't chase perfection, we pursue truth. Raw, unedited, unapologetic. Every piece here is a fragment of someone's reality, stitched into a collective conscience.

Write not to impress, but to express. Because here, your voice is not judged, it is heard.

-Suyash Jha

EDITORIAL BOARD

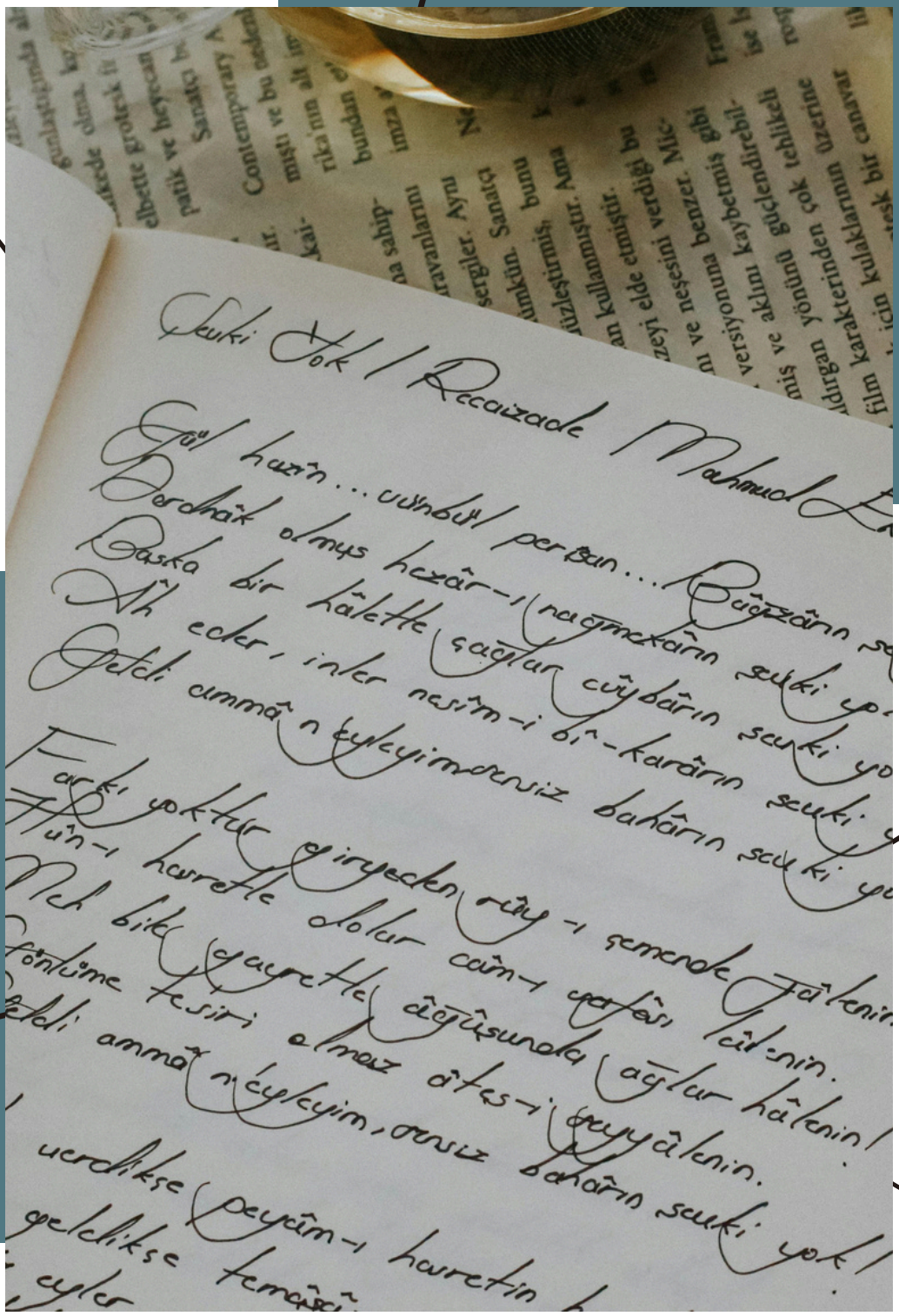
"INKDROP" is not only a magazine but an initiate action of the Student Organisation of United Litterateurs as well said "the secret of getting ahead is getting started". I really want to thank our Founder Shubh Kachhwaha for the glorious opportunity he has given me to be part of such an auspicious organisation on only just a litterateur but also as Chief Editorial Board. This magazine is a saga of every artist hidden inside members of the organisation as they have very beautifully woven words altogether and come up with beautiful creations. It was such a mesmerizing pleasure to go through all of their creations and to have them in INKDROP. Lastly, I want to quote the renowned Pablo Picasso "Inspiration exists, but it has to find you working." So, every reader reading this come up join SOUL, be a part of it and pour your hearts down.Thankyou!!

-Ananya Yadav

Editorial
BOARD

The name Ink Drop symbolises how ideas and feelings spread like ink in water, leaving lasting marks. It represents the power of expression, courage, and the impact of even small ideas when given a platform. Writing, a fundamental human skill, allows us to share thoughts beyond survival, lasting across generations. This magazine, run by young people, provides a space to voice deep, often misunderstood feelings, fostering understanding and self-discovery. Society shapes us but can also impose limits, hindering individuality. While societies endure, minds evolve through new ideas, and writing bridges generations and sparks change. Ink Drop celebrates bravery, speaking out and standing firm, showing that even a single drop can leave a meaningful, lasting imprint on society and change. That's ink drop all about.

-Adarsh Sahu


Şeuki Yok / Recaizade Mahmud
Gül hazîn... vünbül perişan... Bağzârın
Dordhâk olmuş hezâr-ı nağmekârın şeuki yo
Başka bir hâlette çağlar cûybârın şeuki yo
Âh eder, inler nesîm-i bî-karârın şeuki
Geldi ammâ n'eyleyim, sensiz bahârın şeuki yo
Farkı yoktur giryeden rûy-ı çemende Jâlenin
Hûn-ı hasretle dolar câm-ı vefâsı lâlenin.
Meh bile gayrette âğûşunda ağlar hâlenin!
Gönlüme tesiri olmaz âteş-i seyyâlenin.
Geldi ammâ n'eyleyim, sensiz bahârın şeuki yok!
uerdikçe peyâm-ı hasretin
geldikçe temâşâ
eyler

POETRIES

1.

Blood splattered all around,
A room reeking of lust.
Screams and moans was all heard,
Surrounded by monsters cloaked as humans,
But were even worse than animals.

Death sounded peaceful then;
But she chose to fight,
though every bone in her body knew she'd lose,
She refused to be used.

Evil laughs ans thrusting heard,
Muffed screams and drizzles of blood.
The floor soaked in crimson sin,
All her fighting was in vain,
When she was lefft all used and limp.

The world pointed its fingers at her,
"She must have asked for it!"
And, "What did she wear?"

Nobody thought thought she was a 5-year,
In a temple of goddess Durga,
What can she wear?

Nobody thought, she was a doctor,
Saving lives of people,
Only to lose hers,
But, the way she lost hers...

Who cares,
Whetger she is 5 or 80?
In this land,
What she wore is given priority.

Crimson
-Raven

2.

I Belong,
Where echoes of cries are greetings,
Solitary brings happiness not meetings,
People dazed, their lives musings.

I Belong,
Where hymns haunts me,
Screams aren't frightening, truly glee,
In captivated streets, I would never flee.

I Belong,
Where the birds chirping, became kreeching,
Darkness of realm, isn't anymore scaring,
The gloom floats, I see joy drowning.

I Belong,
Where mortals enjoy turmoil of sea,
The festival blooms, death of sacred tree,
Where nightmares are sweet, not thee

Hearth of my Soul

-UROOY

3.

I was surrounded all day
By laughter that didn't belong to me,
Smiling at the right moments.
Saying the right things,
Playing the part so perfectly
No one thought to look twice.
My name was called.
My jokes were heard,
My chair was filled at the table
Yet somehow
My heart sat somewhere else.
Uninvited
Their voices blended into noise.
Like music through a wall
You can't quite touch,
Can't quite feel.
No matter how close you stand
I watched myself from the outside.
Nodding laughing, replying
While a quiet version of me
Curled up in a corner inside.
Wondering why being seen
Is not the same as being known
No one was cruel
No one pushed me away.
And maybe that's what hurts the most
There's no moment to point at.
No sharp edge to blame.
Just a slow ache
That follows me home.
I reached my door,
Stepped into the silence
Pulled out my phone with a
Small foolish hope
Maybe someone

Would ask how my day was,
Maybe someone
Would notice I was gone.
But the screen stayed quiet.
No name. No message.
Just notifications that meant nothing
To the part of me that was waiting
So ai sat on the corner of my room,
Back against the wall
Phone dimming in my hand.
And the question grew louder than
the day had ever been
If I was laughing with everyone...
If I was there the whole time...
If I'm never truly left out...
Then why do I still come here feeling like
I don't belong anywhere at all?
How can a day be so full
And a heart feel so empty?
How can you stand in a circle of people
And still feel like a ghost
Haunting your own life?
So I hold this feeling quietly,
Because it sounds ungrateful out loud.
But inside it echoes-
A soft, stubborn whisper.
"I was there...
So why did I still feel alone?"

Still Alone

-AMRITANSH SINGH SENGAR

4.

The tide reverted, harkening the blues,
The ashes of yesterdays, an unbearable muse,
The Heart rattled, peturbed enough to lose,
An afresh mourning, Crushing the gospels.

The gust of breeze, aroused embedded hues,
The violent optimism, an unfailing bruise,
The miseries endured, least to confuse,
A shattered affinity of soul, Scenarios are jostles.

The prickling lights, sear my views,
The gruff cosmosis, cleaved one I choose,
The anguish I abide, can't be receded as dues,
Noisome tide, Light & breeze, carols of throstle.

Bruised Hope

-UROOY

5.

It's eating her alive,
the slow demise of Julie.
Hands stained with blood,
no amount of soap could cleanse.
Julie looked at her
flames of loathing and rage
burned through the days,
through memories that she caged.
There's no love in her soul,
no truth in her words.
silent wishes to be forgiven,
As diversions soothe the easydriven.
The demon will find her.
So, surrendering,
she pulled the trigger.
The mirror broke
yet she lay silent,
silent on a floor of shattered selves,
silent like the journals on her shelf.

Julie

-DRI

6.

She was badly hurt,
A stupid nerd,
Stain on the white shirt.
He was open armed,
Never harmed,
Strawberries freshly farmed.
She was always a mess,
Poetess,
Full of craziness.
He was holding hands,
Beach sand,
Intellectual wise man.
She was a careless brat,
Lonely Frat,
The cute, ignored door mat.
He was sunshine
Brown eyes
Coffee on bad nights

She was closed drawer
Constant war
Thoughtful yet never sure.
He was the word "Yay",
Textinh "hey?"
Moonlight on dark day.
She was never enough
Tryna act tough
He was everything she was not
Everything she needed but never got.
People believe they are meant to be
something somehow someday.
but I am convinced they can be
nothing cause there is no way

Nothing Noway
-NISHI

7.

As I sit on the ground,
I see the blury images of my wound,
Then I look at the sky,
I feel the light of hope inside.
Hours pass by...& then comes the night,
My melancholy feels like the affection between a princess & a knight,
I already foresee my grievances from the dark parasite.
Thousands of languages in the earth,
& I'm still searching for the one through which I can describe my agony in girth.
Still you'll find me smiling,
For it takes rain to dive away the dark clouds, & my eyes are tired;
So, I choose to hide what's inside,
& show something which, for me, is paradise.
You'll never know,
& I'll never show.
But only if you'd see into my eyes,
So, would come down all the lies.
The clouds are gloomy here,
They rain, but the drops will never fall on your hand,
Only if my eyes find someone who truly understands them,
who cares to see inside,
who sees the sorrow in my smile,
They will rain heavily, & flowers will bloom in my deserted heart.
But, as I said...
There is still a little light between the clouds,
& it shall be there till the day I rest eternally.

The storm in my eyes

-SHRISTI ROY

8.

In the dark, endless night, empty and cold
Pain twist like knives in my soul,
I don't wanna Live like this,
Can you tell me what's wrong with me?

I keep on writing stories
Just to feel something - anything
Feel like my worth less than a dime
Was everything not enough?

But what if a spark break free?
I'm still dreaming
Still believing in myself
Can you see - it's all here, for me?

Feeling Something

- SIDDHI CHOUKSEY

9.

Where have I come?

From dreaming about the floral yards to settling at a rose
From looking up at skies to losing myself in the roads
From desiring the queen crown to smiling at my torn gown
From wanting an arm that leads me out to standing all by myself in the crowd
Here I have come demeaned by the world, tired, pushed and hurled.

The Wrong Dream

Growing up, we all were taught to catch up
Catch up with the speed of the city
Thunder of the people
Grace of the bygones
And, spark of the beholders
But, were never told about the terminus
About the calm intervals
About the need to breathe and sigh
Because, at the end of the day, it's about
building a home and not making a house

-Harjas Kaur Tuteja

10. That kinda beauty

Somebody asked me,
"Explain him.. to me"
which somehow was hard for me,
'cause?
I didn't have the words.
The words to describe
the kinda beauty he has.

Should I describe his heavenly eyes first?
Or about his serene smile?
Should I just keep all these aside
and find the words
to adore his ethereal voice for a while?

It's just too confusing for me.
His beauty was just—
Just too surreal to be reality—
It just made me think,
"Is he for real?".

His angelic presence,
Even the smallest marks rested on his face
is like stars in the night sky.
And he himself?
Moonlight where still water lies..
Ohh, he's just too divine to be described in a few words.

And once again
when somebody asked me to describe him,
I still couldn't find the words.
Because his—
his was,
THAT KINDA BEAUTY..

-AASTHA

11.

The eyes, which carried
a lot more than one could see..
It held the pain,
Or just the slightest trace of hope.

Flashbacks flickered-
a glimpse of a bond
tied with an invisible rope.

A silence too loud,
a closeness never spoken,
Two hearts once near,
now quietly broken.

Yet, the bond now
remains unseen,
the broken thread,
shattered near the window pane.

A Loud Silence

12.

The person she used to be
isn't the same anymore.
That bubbly, charming girl
got lost somewhere..
along the dark sea shore.

Her laughter, that once echoed
in the whole room,
is now buried,
beneath the waves of quiet gloom.

The smile that once
lit up the endless sky-
now flickers faint,
a memory passing by.

She changed herself,
for an unspoken dream.
a silent fire,
that no one ever saw.

but it burned-
quitely, completely,
within her all along.
Raw

A Silent Fire

-AASTHA

13. My soul a treachery of words

Solitude and misery carves a way to my unhinged home,
my mind a deathbed of conviction trickling down my bone.
It's remnants displaying a new beginning, tightening my vulnerable frame even deeply sinking.
I renounced my joy and embraced the dejection and found myself in a scattered position.
Too dense aren't you? rang in my ear,
I sighed in defeat thoughts too ambiguous.

I gazed blankly at my eyes in the reflection, that once glistened with contentment.
Now appeared dull and darker with each moment if glee buried in agony.
I stared at it for a minute or so, only to scrutinize each flaw and smile softly.

Blowing the candles with a teary eye
I sighed again witnessing the cry
His soft voice whispered in my ear
I turned around my joy disappeared
His presence remained a mere wind
His voice echoed words unwavering

And here i am, lying down in absolute silence
Listening to my countless heartbeats as they are uttering unnecessary words to hide that pain which has tainted it's home in painful red colour.

-AKRITI PANDEY

14.

The psyche ward

-DRI

They say
Things that often seem pretty
Are a whole damn mess on the inside
It seems to me that
My ideal of grandeur, mansions and castles high,
Were actually asylums, places I'd rather deny

The raindrops are leaking off
that vintage cedar roof
A promise broken,
a failure to sustain
If I were that roof, I'd shatter too
Because What's the point of existence
if I fail to see it through?

The world progresses, but in its heart
It regresses, neglecting every part
For they find home in lies and excuses
And a prison in truths and reality
The roof was flawed from the start
Built to break and fall
unable to deal with what was to come
I guess you can't blame the roof afterall

Promises are made to be broken
And conscious decisions aren't mistakes
It's terrifying to face the truth
That at times the mind can take the worst route

If their sins were acknowledged
Then maybe they'd all be in the psych ward
In war with monsters and ghosts
Who keep haunting the guilt
Till they kill themselves cause they now know
The worth of peace
After all that mess was built.

15.

They crowned a crowd and called it wise,
Put ballots where the compass lies.
We learnt one truth since schoolyard days,
“Democracy” in holy praise.
No questions asked, no doubts allowed,
For who dares doubt the roaring crowd?

Plato stood still, the storm in sight,
A lone mind screaming through the night.
He warned us of the Ship at sea,
Where fools vote out expertise.
The sailor shouts, the drunkards cheer,
The navigator disappears.

They mock the man who reads the stars,
Then crash the ship and blame the scars.
For truth speaks soft, while lies scream loud,
And reason drowns beneath the crowd.
In mobs, the clever lose their voice,
Noise, not knowledge, gets the choice.

Athens voted clean and fair,
And killed a mind too rare to spare.
Not by kings, nor tyrant’s hand,
But “people’s will” made death stand grand.
Rome fell slow, not by the sword,
But when applause replaced the lord.

Weimar cheered, the ballots sang,
Then boots marched hard with iron clang.
Demons rise when crowds are fed
With sugar lies and truths left dead.
For hunger votes, and fear obeys,
And charm outshines the thinker’s ways.

Democracy sells us sacred pride,
“All thoughts are equal,” truth denied.
But ten loud fools in roaring rage
Don’t beat one fact locked in a cage.
Opinion doesn’t turn to gold
Just cause it’s loudly bought and sold.

We don’t vote mid surgery,
Nor poll the skies for how to fly.
Yet nations fall by popular scream,
Governed by trend, not thought or dream.
Freedom dressed as choice and might
Is mass manipulation dressed in white.

“Anti people,” they cry in haste,
At minds too trained, too sharp, too chaste.
For skill threatens the mob’s control,
And reason scares the hungry soul.
So kings are crowned by viral lies,
While wisdom starves and slowly dies.

““लोकतंत्र” they chant like prayer,
But truth was never equal there.
For power bends to who can sway,
Not who can guide us on the way.
The ship still sinks, the crowd still claps,
Democracy sleeps in its own traps.

So call me cruel, elitist, wrong,
I’ll still choose truth over a song.
For better ruled than loudly free,
Is worse than chains we fail to see.
And history, in blood and flame,
Whispers we were taught this game.

The Ship at the Sea

-ACHINTYA PRAJAPATI

16.

Between the pages of a silent book,
Lies a world we choose to look.
A place where whispers turn to art,
And stories quietly touch the heart.

There, courage walks on fragile lines,
Hope grows softly between the signs.
Heroes rise, though fear is near,
And broken souls learn not to fear.

A reader enters, calm and still,
Yet leaves with thoughts that bend their will.
For every tale the pages share,
Plants unseen dreams everywhere.

Books do not shout; they simply stay,
Waiting for minds to drift their way.
And those who read begin to see
A deeper truth of what life can be.

The world between pages

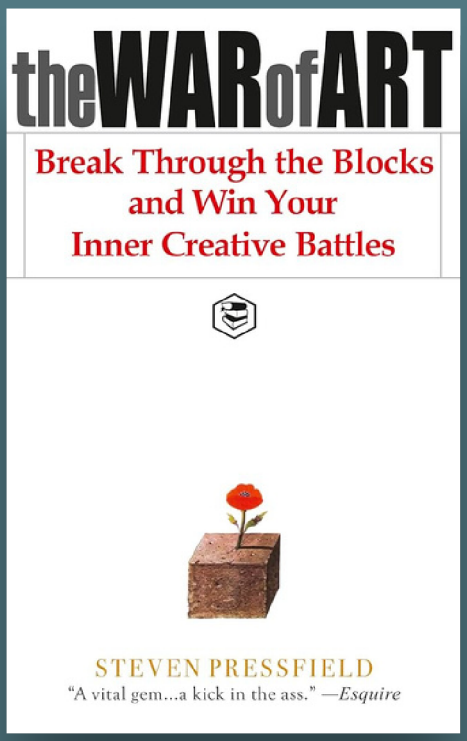
-KHUSHI DHUNNA

17.

Some may describe it as heaven.
Some may describe it as hell.
I personally would say it's like the ocean,
because sometimes the beauty reflected
In our vision could've never determined its depth.
Because sometimes falling in love may
Have taught some to float regardless of the depth.
But sometimes, for people like me,
Drowning was really all it had left to shed.
But maybe I knew,
maybe I knew of how deep I could've drowned,
but isn't that the real art,
to be blinded by it all found
by what it is called
our beautiful word,
love.

What is love?

-KWIEEPR


theWARofART
Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles
STEVEN PRESSFIELD
"A vital gem...a kick in the ass." —Esquire

01. THE WAR OF ART

BY STEVEN PRESSFIELD

The War of Art by Steven Pressfield This book hit me in a very direct way. It's not like those typical motivational books that try to make you feel good. This one actually calls you out. The main thing in the book is "Resistance" and honestly, I felt like he was describing my own behavior. That feeling when you know what you should do, but you still don't do it... that's exactly what this book talks about. What I liked is that it doesn't over-explain things. It's simple but sharp. He keeps saying one thing again and again , "if you want to create something, you have to show up every day. No excuses. No waiting for motivation." There's one idea that stayed with me; becoming a "professional". Not in terms of money, but in mindset. Like you stop acting based on mood and just do the work. That part felt real. Overall, I think this book is not for beginners who are just exploring. It's for people who already know what they want to do but keep delaying it. For me, it didn't teach "how to create", it showed me why I keep avoiding it.

-Prakhar Kushwaha

02. BEFORE THE COFFEE GETS COLD

BY TOSHIKAZU KAWAGUCHI

“If you could go back in time, who would want to meet?”

This question drives all four stories in the novel Before the coffee gets cold; it is the first book in the pentalogy written by Toshikazu Kawaguchi. This book is set in a small magical cafe in Japan called Funiculi Funicula. This is a book that is based on the genre of magical realism, which is one of the most popular genres among youngsters.

There is a legend about the cafe that if you sit in a particular seat, you can travel to the past or the future. But there are some specific rules that you must obey to enable your endeavor. One of them being: no matter what you say or do, what is meant to happen cannot change. And the other thing that you have only as long before the coffee gets cold. Upon hearing these rules many visitors get disappointed.

We see a total of four tales from the cafe in this book about loss, detachment, regret, and acceptance. The first story is about a women named Fumiko who goes back to talk to her boyfriend who suddenly left for America and is left thinking about what could've been. The second story is about a nurse named Kohtake who travels back to meet her husband who now suffers from Alzheimer's and her pain of losing her love. The third and most touching story is about Hirai who travels back to meet her sister to resolve the guilt she felt about their strained relationship. And the last story is about a mother who travels to the future to meet her daughter after knowing that there's a chance, she won't survive childbirth.

Overall, the book feels like a nice warm hug to everybody that has experienced loss. I loved the way the stories don't really revolve around teaching morals but at the same time whispers a silent message and lets you linger with it.

Gautam buddha said “in the end the whole of life is an art of letting go” and this book teaches just that about letting go, of not only experiences and people but also feelings. And how unsaid words hold the strongest feelings and that are not ephemeral.

-Khadija Vanak

PROSES

01. The Missing book in the set

The notification chimed for the tenth time on my phone. I did not respond. Sitting on a narrow cot in my balcony, my back pressed against its wooden frame, I became aware of a stiffness settling into my body. Yet what hardened in that moment was not only my muscles, but a boundary—one I had not known I needed until it had already been crossed too many times.

We live in a culture that romanticizes extremes. Loyalty is measured in hypotheticals: Would you help hide a body for someone you love? The question itself belongs more to fiction than to life. Most relationships do not fracture under the weight of extraordinary events. They erode quietly, through repetition and expectation.

A more honest question might be simpler, even unremarkable: Would you listen to the same complaint for the hundredth time? Would you help with physical labor when it is inconvenient? Would you make small, consistent efforts without expecting recognition? It is in these moments that care is tested—and often exhausted.

Most relationships do not fracture under the weight of extraordinary events. They erode quietly, through repetition and expectation.

There is a book missing from my half-read book set, an absence more noticeable than its presence. The final volume was never returned to me, withheld as retaliation for not attending a birthday celebration. What might have remained a trivial conflict slowly assumed symbolic weight. That unread book became a marker of how often a boundary had been crossed until it no longer registered as one. Today, the incomplete set rests quietly on my bookshelf, a bitter souvenir of a friendship that once existed but no longer does.

That birthday marked more than an occasion; it marked an ending.

.

Affection had transformed into obligation, shaped by the modern expectation of constant availability. In an age where presence is measured by response time and care by performative gestures, friendship can quietly become coercive. Was wishing someone at midnight insufficient?

Affection had transformed into obligation, shaped by the modern expectation of constant availability."

Was arranging a cake under the urgency of symbolism still inadequate? At some point, the relationship began to resemble a contract—one that demanded compliance rather than consent.

I broke my own rules for her. I stepped beyond limits I had set for myself, convinced that crossing them would finally make me enough. But it was never enough. I was running after something that was never mine to claim, trying relentlessly to fit myself into a jar I did not belong in—shrinking where I should have expanded.

I held her as she cried through her first failure in social communication, listening until exhaustion felt like loyalty. I paid her courtfees because I knew she would never ask her family for help. I gifted her an expensive book after pleading with my mother, because I believed joy justified the cost. These gestures were not dramatic sacrifices; they were quiet decisions made out of care. Yet none of them were remembered. None of them counted.

Slowly, I realized I was not just seeking friendship—I was seeking admission. I was trying to become part of a family that never considered me its own, not even marginally. I stood at the edges, offering more than was asked, hoping generosity would translate into belonging. It never did.

Attimes, I wonder how I ever considered them friends at all. Perhaps they were, once—or perhaps that is simply what I needed them to be. What remains undeniable is the hollow left behind by betrayal, a space that did not close easily. The wound was not only personal. In moments of resentment, they spoke not just of me, but of my family as well. Friendship, I had believed, was meant to heal—to draw you closer to the people who raised you. Instead, it fractured something far more foundational.

They called me an attention seeker. Yet vulnerability is not performance; it is proximity. We are most open not with strangers, but with those we believe are safe. To call that attention seeking is to misunderstand intimacy entirely.

Vulnerability is not performance; it is proximity

I do not know exactly when my definition of friendship changed, only that it did. I grew distant. I told myself distance was wisdom, that withdrawal was protection. They had taught me, inadvertently, that absence was acceptable. Only later did I recognize the cost: distance, when chosen without reflection, is not always self-preservation. Sometimes it is the quiet loss of oneself—mistaken for strength when it is, in fact, survival.

Overtime, I learned something else—knowledge, too, is a form of protection. Where there is awareness, there is the ability to defend oneself. Self-defence, when exercised with restraint, is not violence; and knowledge used for one's own growth is not exploitation. Our mythologies have long understood this balance. The goddess who holds a lotus also carries a trident. Krishna's flute rests alongside his chakra. Even Mahadev's innocence is accompanied by strength. Gentleness and firmness are not contradictions; they are companions.

Anger, I realized, is not the enemy. It has its place, as clarity does. What matters is that even in anger, care remains present—not to preserve the bond at any cost, but to preserve one's humanity. In the end, it is rarely me versus you. It is us versus the problem. When that distinction is lost, relationships turn adversarial rather than reparative.

This fracture taught me that some friendships are meant not to last, but to instruct. Friendship is an enigma—its meaning shifts each time it is redefined.

What intimacy looks like to one person may feel suffocating to another. Everyone carries different love languages, different expectations, different capacities. Perhaps we did not crave the same form of friendship. And perhaps that difference was not a failure, but a lesson.

We are often taught that the absence of boundaries signifies unconditional love. Yet the absence of boundaries more often signals the erosion of self. A friendship without limits is like a book without a spine: flexible, impressive at first, but incapable of holding itself together. What begins as intimacy—shared passwords, shared access, shared emotional labor—can end in erasure. Deleted accounts. Deleted trust.

For a time, I believed this experience had dismantled my faith in friendship altogether.

Instead, it clarified it. Unexpectedly, it was another friendship—quieter, less demanding— that held me together afterward. We did not share intensity or constant proximity. What we shared was presence when it mattered.

We were visibly different. She was introspective; I was expressive. She preferred practicality; I gravitated toward sentiment. She did not read books; I read meanings into moments. Our differences did not dissolve with time—they remained intact and unthreatening. When people questioned how such opposites could coexist as friends, we exchanged knowing smiles. One plus one does not always equal two, I would say. Sometimes it becomes eleven—parallel, distinct, and complete.

She reshaped my understanding of intimacy. Friendship, I learned, does not require daily reaffirmation. It does not demand access or surveillance. At times, it is quiet. At times, it simply waits.

Recently at a book fair, I purchased the missing final volume of that old book set. Not to recover what was lost, but to acknowledge what was unfinished. Some relationships do not return. Some stories must be completed independently. Growth, perhaps, is learning when to close a chapter—and when to keep reading.

-Divya Yadav

02. Deonar Dumping Ground: Innocents in the Shadow of Asia's Largest Landfill

When we think of Mumbai, we recall skyscrapers, modern infrastructure, and a high standard of living, which earn Mumbai the title of the "City of Dreams" because it embodies endless opportunities and draws millions who aspire to turn their ambitions into reality amidst its vibrant spirit and relentless pace. Sadly, it's the same heaven where hell exists, and that hell is Asia's largest landfill, The Deonar Dumping Ground.

It was established to dispose of the waste produced in Kurla. After decades of expansion of Bombay, which was later named Mumbai, the site brought refineries, housing colonies, slums, and transport links into proximity. Now nearly a century has passed, and the landfill created to control one village now serves a sprawling metro city. Covering over 311 hectares, it recieves

Deonar dumping ground is one of those rare places in the world where sunlight struggles to pierce through the towering layers of plastic waste. If sunlight itself struggles to reach this ground, then how can we force people to live here? About 7 lakh people who live in slums have to eat food dirtier than the very soil beneath their feet. Here, clean air is absent, but the taps flow with water yellower than petrol, they have to breathe air thicker with toxic smoke than oxygen, and they have to sleep on ground softer with garbage than the Earth.

All of this did not happen overnight. Deonar began operation in 1927 after the BMC (Bombay Municipal Corporation) signed it under the supervision of the Municipal Commissioner of Bombay.

around 5,500 tonnes of municipal waste, 600 tonnes of silt, and 25 tonnes of bio-waste every day. For decades, people have also noticed mountains of garbage that can extend up to 164 ft, comparable to an 18- to 19-story building.

Now, let us all focus more on the conditions of the population, like the famous 2016 landfill fire, which unfortunately resulted in aggravating asthma, Tuberculosis, and respiratory ailments, and carries the scars of the donor effect. Life expectancy in the area hovers around 39 years, starkly below Maharashtra's urban average of 73.5 years and worst of all, it took down 74 schools in that area due to the unfavourable air quality. Ragpickers, including many children, sift through waste with no protective gear; they are just getting about 500 to 1000 per 6 x 6 ft room to rent. But according to me, this is not the issue that can't be abolished; many councillors and MLAs are struggling with the limited authority in implementing meaningful change if they get full authority, there is still a chance that it can make Deonar a new Indore.

"Deonar is a reminder that ignoring waste today creates mountains tomorrow."

All this was possible in Indore because of the strong municipal leadership and private NGO partnership to execute this doomed undertaking.

It's not like the government hasn't done anything; it has provided significant development to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) floated a 2,368 crore rupees tender to dispose of 185 lakh metric tonnes of bioremediation waste, reclaiming about 110 hectares in over three years. This effort dovetails with the Dharavi redevelopment project and collaboration with the Adani groups.

Carrying out Deonar's cleanup is turning out to be much more complex than before, while the BMC has ambitious plans for biomining, waste-to-energy, and bio-CNG projects, the ground reality is a mix of technical challenges and administrative roadblocks, even though there is a huge issue of drugs in the population. That proves the landfill itself is unstable,

with waste mounds reaching up to 40 meters high, making large-scale excavation both hazardous and time-consuming. Methane emissions continue to spark fires, threatening workers' safety and slowing down operations whenever they occur. On top of that, multiple projects running simultaneously at the same site—bioremediation on one end, energy generation on the other—create confusion and inefficiencies. Experts also warn that unless Mumbai significantly improves waste segregation and reduces its daily dumping at the source, even the most advanced cleanup efforts will feel like a temporary fix. Past experiences at Mulund, where a similar project dragged on for years without completion, only add to public scepticism. The fear is that Deonar could become yet another case of lofty promises weighed down by poor execution, unless there's stronger technical collaboration, strict timelines, and consistent monitoring. The government must manage one more disposal centre so that the upcoming waste doesn't make the situation even more unmanageable.

-Adarsh Sahu

The successful execution of their plans can make it a livable place and can convert the once- toxic hills of Deonar into reclaimed land for housing, green spaces, and better infrastructure like the other parts of Mumbai. Let's not forget that once Singapore was the largest slum where only fishermen used to live, and now it's one of the richest countries, and for that, they first focused on their people, not on the conditions of their population. Like that,without upstream waste segregation, better civic management, and empowered local leadership, Deonar risks being just one more landfill to be "handled"—rather than healed.

"The fire of Deonar will not end with garbage — it burns through every silence that let it grow. But in its smoke we find a choice: to choke on neglect, or to rise and build a city where hope breathes again."

03. A GenZ's approach to marriage!

Marriage is often described as a sacred social institution. Sociologists define an institution as a system governed by rules, norms, and regulations that organize human behaviour. But this definition raises a question that many of my generation quietly wrestle with: if something is governed by rules and expectations, how can it simultaneously claim to liberate the very people within it?

Love, after all, is supposed to be liberating. It is meant to expand the self, not bind it.

For generations, marriage has been placed on a pedestal—described as sacred, permanent, and socially necessary. Yet the very language surrounding it often makes it appear restrictive rather than meaningful. Particularly in societies like India, the institution of marriage has historically been experienced unevenly: liberating for men, but constraining for women. Expectations around domestic labour, childbearing, obedience, and sacrifice have frequently been framed as duties inherent to marriage, rather than choices negotiated between equals.

Perhaps this is why many young women today approach marriage with hesitation rather than excitement.

For much of Gen Z, liberation means something different. It means the ability to work, to live independently, to shape one's own life trajectory, and to make deeply personal decisions—such as whether or not to have children—without social surveillance. When marriage is presented as an institution heavy with expectations, it begins to resemble a social contract imposed by society rather than a relationship chosen by individuals. But perhaps the problem lies not in marriage itself, but in the way society defines it.

Marriage does not need to be framed as a sacred, immutable bond, nor as a rigid institution upheld by tradition. When we elevate it to such categories, we risk making it as dogmatic and inflexible as the very structures many modern individuals are learning to question.

At its most basic level, marriage is far simpler—and perhaps far more human.

It is simply two individuals attempting to share a life.

Two people trying, imperfectly, to understand one another. Trying to give love, to receive love, and to sustain it through the ordinary challenges of living together.
Nothing sacred. Nothing institutional. Just human effort.
If society were to present marriage less as an obligation and more as a partnership freely chosen between equals, perhaps younger generations would not fear it as much as they currently do. Perhaps it would cease to feel like a constraint placed upon freedom, and instead become something that coexists with it.
Because love, when genuine, does not imprison.
It simply asks two people to try.

-Achintya Prajapati

04. The Unseen

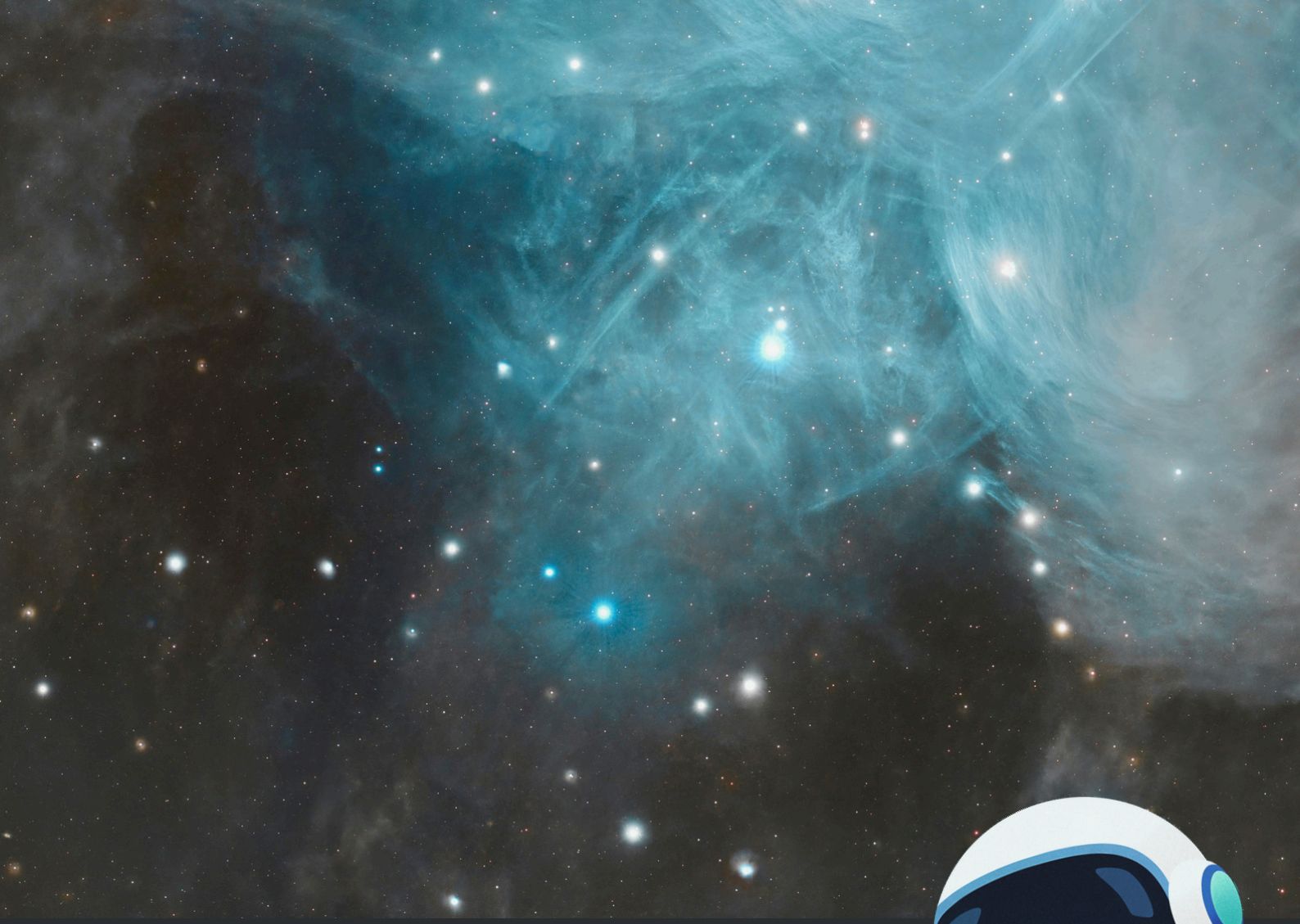
There's a version of you that the world doesn't fully see.
Not because you're hiding, but because some parts of a person aren't meant to be easily explained. They're felt. They exist in the pauses between words, in the way you think too much about certain things and not at all about others. In the quiet moments when you're alone and your mind drifts to places you don't always understand.

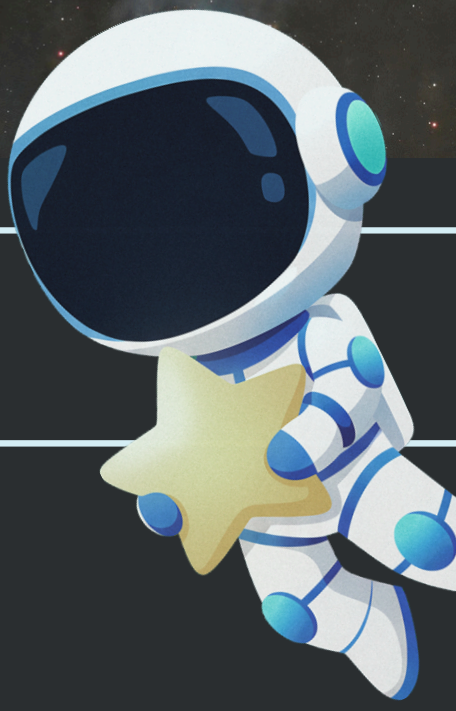
This is for that part of you.
The part that carries more than it lets on. The part that keeps going, even when it's tired in ways that rest doesn't fix. You've learned how to function, how to show up, how to smile at the right moments but there's still something deeper within you that's always thinking, always searching.
Maybe lately, you've been questioning yourself more than usual.
Am I doing enough?
Am I becoming who I'm supposed to be?
Why does everything feel unclear?
It's easy to believe that everyone else has things figured out.
That they're moving forward with certainty while you're stuck in hesitation. But the truth is, most people are ju st better at hiding their confusion. There is no fixed timeline for becoming who you are. No universal moment where everything suddenly makes sense.
You are not behind.
You are in the middle of becoming and that space is messy, uncertain, and often uncomfortable. But it's also where the most honest parts of you begin to take shape.
If you've been hard on yourself, pause for a second.
Think about everything you've already made it through. Not just the big, obvious struggles, but the quiet ones too, the days you didn't feel like yourself, the moments you doubted everything, the times you kept going without knowing why. Those things count. They always have.
You're stronger than you give yourself credit for, but not in a loud, obvious way. Your strength is quieter. It shows up in your persistence, in your ability to feel deeply and still move forward.
And yes feeling somethung this deeply can be exhausting.

A Quiet Exploration of the Hidden, Unspoken Layers of Self That Continue Becoming Even in Uncertainty.

Caring too much, thinking too much, holding onto things longer than you should it can make the world feel heavier. But it also means you experience life in a way that's real and unfiltered. There's something rare about that, even if it doesn't always feel like a gift.
You don't need to become less of who you are to make life easier.
You just need to learn how to be on your own side.
Not only when you're doing well, not only when you feel confident but especially when you're unsure, when you're overwhelmed, when you feel like you're falling short. That's when it matters most.
Because the relationship you have with yourself sets the tone for everything else.
People may come and go. Situations will change. Life will shift in ways you can't control. But you will always have to live with yourself. So be someone you can stay with someone who doesn't abandon you the moment things get difficult.
It's okay to not have everything figured out right now.
It's okay if your path looks different than you expected. It's okay if you're still trying to understand what you want, who you are, where you're going. None of that makes you lost, it makes you human.
There is no perfect version of life waiting for you at the end of all this.
There's just you growing, changing, learning as you go.
And maybe that's enough.
Maybe you don't need all the answers today. Maybe you just need to keep going, to keep showing up for your own life in whatever way you can. Even if it's slow. Even if it's uncertain.
You're allowed to take your time.
You're allowed to rest without feeling guilty. To step back, to breathe, to exist without constantly trying to prove something.
Your worth isn't tied to how much you achieve or how quickly you figure things out.
It never was.
So if today feels heavy, if your thoughts feel louder than usual, if you're questioning things you thought you understood just know that it's part of the process.
You are not failing.
You are becoming.
And even if it doesn't feel like it right now, that quiet, unseen growth within youit's leading somewhere meaningful.
Just don't give up on yourself before you get there.

_Suyash Jha





OPERATION BRAINROT.
THE FINAL WARNING

CHARACTERS

* Narrator
* Commander Umusazi
* Alien Scientist Gusambana
* Alien Soldier Intege Nke
* Robot Translator 3000

SCENE 1. THE CONTACT

Narrator: ***High up in space an alien ship was hiding behind clouds. They had been watching humans for weeks trying to understand their language. Every day the signals they got were more confusing and scarier.***

Commander Umusazi(walking back and forth):
Whats going on? Are humans still acting normal?

Scientist Gusambana(typing quickly):
It depends on what you mean by Commander. Their way of talking and behaving is strange. They even cover their bodies, which's pretty basic.

Soldier Intege Nke:
Commander we got a message from Earth.

Commander Umusazi:
Play it.

robot Translator (mechanical voice):
Bro, that guy is so weird. He can't even talk to a girl. His confidence is really low even a pig wouldn't want him.

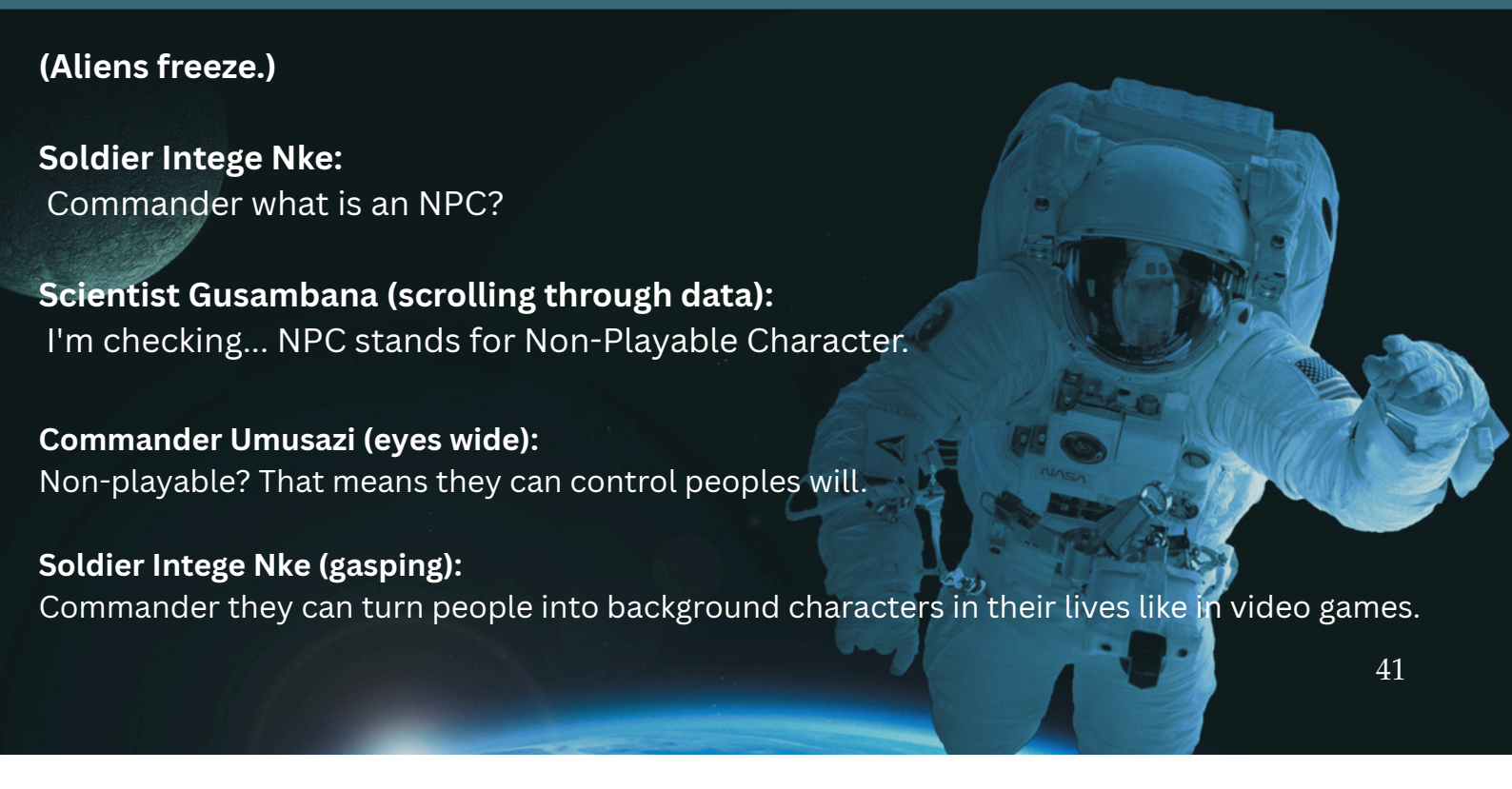
(Aliens freeze.)

Soldier Intege Nke:
Commander what is an NPC?

Scientist Gusambana (scrolling through data):
I'm checking... NPC stands for Non-Playable Character.

Commander Umusazi (eyes wide):
Non-playable? That means they can control peoples will.

Soldier Intege Nke (gasping):
Commander they can turn people into background characters in their lives like in video games.



Scientist Gusambana:
This means they have the technology to stop people's independent thinking.

Commander Umusazi (dramatically):
Record this as a threat. We need to watch these humans all the time.

Narrator: ***The aliens had no idea that humans were just joking. To them it sounded like a threat.***

SCENE 2 . THE LAG EMERGENCY

(Alarm beeps. Red lights flicker.)

Robot Translator:
A message from Earth's communication network.

Commander Umusazi:
Play it.

Robot Translator:
"I'm not feeling well today my brain's lagging, I guess I have to take a bottle of old monk!"
(Aliens stare at each other in shock.)

Soldier Intege Nke:
Commander did you hear that?

Scientist Gusambana:
Yes, humans admit their brains can get tired. But soldier, that's not the matter of seriousness. The matter of true seriousness is the fact that these humans take in OLD MONKS to recover!!

Commander Umusazi:
What does that mean?

Scientist Gusambana:
This means that we are cooked, Commander! Can't you understand?

Soldier Intege Nke (panicking):
Commander, that means they can turn old monks into liquids—which means they can do it very well to us also.

Commander Umusazi :
Hmm.
Soldier Intege Nke :
These humans are scary. They use the word "slay" a lot. They’re probably planning to attack our planet.

SCENE 3. THE DAD JOKE FILES

(**Alarm. Lights flash red.)**

Robot Translator:
Warning, old humor signal detected.

Commander Umusazi:
Humor? That sounds dangerous. Play it.

Robot Translator (dramatically):
"Why is six afraid of seven? Because seven ate nine."

(Aliens freeze in horror.)

Soldier Intege Nke (whispering):
Commander, numbers are eating each other.

Scientist Gusambana:
This breaks math rules. They're primitive.

Commander Umusazi:
Maybe their math has come alive.

Soldier Intege Nke:
If numbers can eat numbers, what will they do to us?

Scientist Gusambana:
Commander, this confirms numbers can be used as weapons.

Commander Umusazi (serious):
We face a civilization that uses math as a weapon. They might even turn me into a drink and use it to wash their...

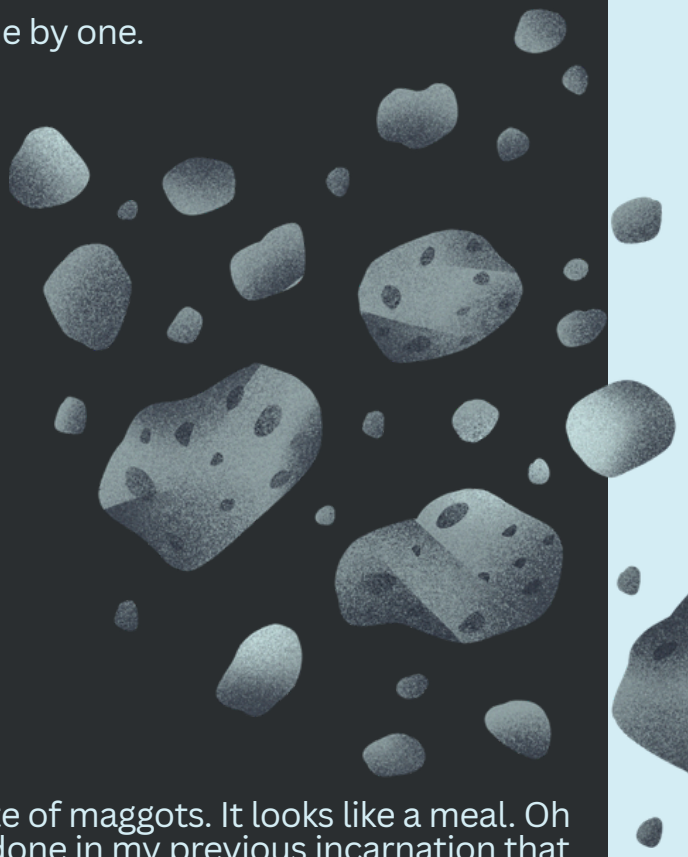
Soldier Intege Nke:
Wash what, sir?

Commander Umusazi (frantically):
Ummmmm... never mind, my dear comrade !

SCENE 4. DAD JOKES THAT TERRIFY ALIENS

(Screens flash rapidly.)

Robot Translator:
Multiple humor signals detected. Playing them one by one.



Joke 1. The Spaghetti Incident

Robot Translator:
"What do you call spaghetti? An impasta."

Soldier Intege Nke:
Commander, they can create food.

Scientist Gusambana:
They can make it look real.

Commander Umusazi:
That's deception technology.

Soldier Intege Nke:
What if they replace our food with food?

Scientist Gusambana:
We'd never know what we're eating.

Intege Nke:
They can add things to our food. It could be a plate of maggots. It looks like a meal. Oh GOD! My heavenly father! What bad deeds had I done in my previous incarnation that now I have to fight these humans? (crying) Please! With one stroke of your lightning, kindly free me from this mortal world!!

Joke 2 The Math Book Problem

Robot Translator:
"Why did the math book look sad? Because it had problems."

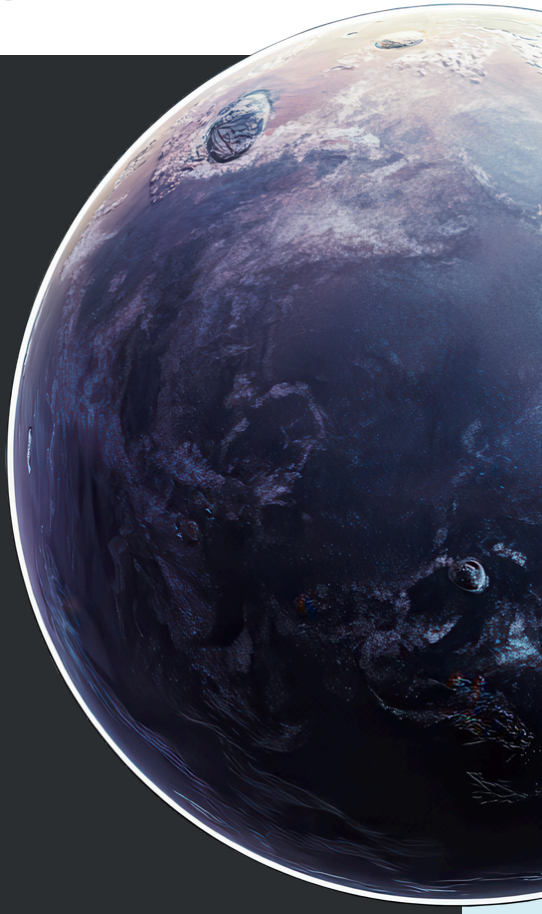
Soldier Intege Nke:
Commander, even their books feel sad.

Scientist Gusambana:
Their knowledge systems are suffering.

Intege Nke:
This planet is weird.

Umusazi:
Wait, this is big. These humans have reached a level where even their books have consciousness. We must act fast.

FINAL SCENE. THE BREAKING POINT



(Sirens blaring. Red emergency lights everywhere.)

Robot Translator:
Final transmission detected.

Commander Umusazi:
Play it.

Robot Translator:
"That joke killed me."

(Complete silence.)

Soldier Intege Nke:
Commander, they can kill each other with jokes.

Scientist Gusambana:
Humans can use humor as a weapon.

Commander Umusazi (pause):
Enough.

(He slams his fist on the control panel.)

Commander Umusazi:
These humans use jokes, numbers and language as weapons. They turn people into NPCs. They control time with lag. They create fake food. They use math as a weapon. They turn Old monks into beverages... and what else!

Soldier Intege Nke:
Commander, we can't win this war.

Scientist Gusambana:
Retreat is our only option.

Commander Umusazi (raising hand):
All units, for the sake of our fatherland, we must fight to win this land, even if we die in the attempt. Remember, God will be waiting for you in the heavens above.

Everyone (shouting):
YES SIR, YES!!

Umusazi:
Wait, another signal is coming.

Everyone:
What is it?

Robot:
BEEP
AHA
KUDIYE NI TERE
BROWN RANG NE
MUNDE PATT DENI SADE MERE TOWN DE AH
KUDIYE NI TERE
BROWN RANG NE
MUNDE PAT DENI SAARE MERE TOWN DE...
KOYI KAAM UTHE JAWE NA
ROTI PAANI KHAVE NA
GORI GORI KUDIYA NU
KOYI NU LAAWE NA.
SIGNAL LOST...

Umusazi:
What does this mean?

Robot:
Let me translate...

Umusazi:
Just give me the idea.
Robot (fast robotic voice):
This song is about fair-skinned girls taking over youths' hearts in my town. Even people in love with girls forget about them. They refuse to eat or drink due to love.

Umusazi:
This is bad. Humans have reached a level where girls can hypnotize people, making them not eat or drink, leading to their deaths. The white-skinned girls are like us. It means they're ready to attack us.

Gusambana:
Yes, sir.

Umusazi:
Should we retreat?

Gusambana:
Yes, sir.

Umusazi:
That would be cowardly.

Gusambana:
No, sir.

Umusazi:
Why?

Gusambana:
We're not running away; we're just waiting for preparations.

Umusazi:
How long will preparations take?

Gusambana:
A hundred thousand years, sir!

Umusazi:
Perfect! Preparations will take a hundred thousand years. Everyone, retreat because preparations will take a hundred thousand years.

NARRATOR. CLOSING

NARRATOR:

THE ALIENS LEFT EARTH TERRIFIED. THEY WEREN'T SCARED OF OUR MILITARY OR WEAPONRY. THEY WERE SCARED BECAUSE THEY COULDN'T UNDERSTAND OUR HUMOR, MEMES, OR CASUAL LANGUAGE.

NARRATOR (SMILING):

SOMETIMES FUNNY MISUNDERSTANDINGS CAN SAVE THE WORLD—OUR WORLD. FUNNY MISUNDERSTANDINGS CAN SAVE EARTH—OUR EARTH.

-Rishiraj Choubey

Experts' Address

On Reading Inkdrop

To read The Inkdrop is to enter a space that resembles a museum more than a magazine. Each piece does not simply present itself, as it waits. The poems, especially, resist immediate clarity. They do not ask to be understood all at once, but to be lingered over, returned to, read again from a different place within oneself. What emerges, then, is not a fixed meaning, but a shifting encouter. Across the issue, a pattern becomes visible: solitude, longing, rupture, and quiet resilience. Yet these are not stable themes contained within the texts. They take shape only in relation to the reader who approaches them. The same poem does not feel the same twice. What is read depends on what is brought to it. In this sense, *The Inkdrop* does not merely collect writing, it stages acts of reading. The editorial vision foregrounds authenticity over perfection, allowing fragments of experience to remain unresolved. This refusal to finalize meaning becomes the magazine's strength. The works do not close upon themselves; they remain open, incomplete, awaiting continuation in the reader's perception. To read this issue, then, is not to extract meaning from it, but to encounter the limits of one's own understanding. What the magazine offers is not certainty, but possibility. And what it asks, quietly, of its reader is this: How long are you willing to remain before what does not immediately yield?

Confessing to a Museum Artefact

The jade bird winces at the (sun) lit home
counting her exile, perching atop her jade nest
the jade nest in the jade branch
almost sways in the air
warm from the breath of visitors
who peer through the glass, eye to eye
her never-blinking eyes, resumes
her bare naked vision, to strip
the creator of hers, among the dead unknown
who endearingly imagined the jade bird's home.

-Mr. Udbhas Bhoi

Once was Medusa violated,
when Poseidon possessed lust,
Athena's jealousy thrived,
cursed, beheaded by perseus;

"GUILTY!", assented by mods,
"wearing tight clothes, taint,
impious, outraging gods",
hence raped, by his agent,

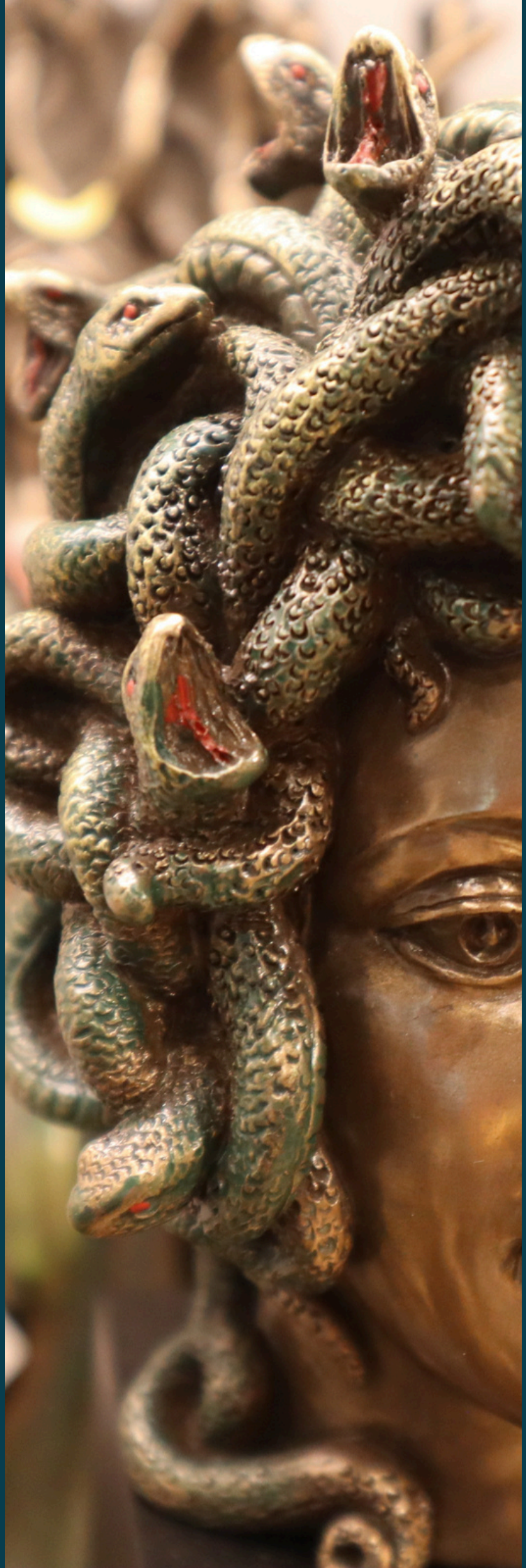
her bed thorny, fame floral,
"What does sufferer ails?",
'sufferer' sounds immoral,
Thus word ,'Victim' hails,

several thus are wrong,
donning worried masquerade,
once the assault is done,
commence hence justice parade,

since I write for the cause,
I may be a worshipper of pretense,
the law of causality, effects,
one, who opines his presence

and when blue blots of ink,
spills over pink cheeks,
Once again his imagination rapes her,
while poet only peeks.

-Mr. Siddhanth Sharma



The Inkdrop magazine is more than just a collection of art, poetry, and prose, there's a certain honesty in it, the kind that gently pulls you in. By the end, you find yourself feeling a quiet connection to the people behind the pages.

-Ms. Parul Ailani

“The purpose of literature is to turn blood into ink.”

— T.S. Eliot

Youth can be writers because writing is not about age, but about curiosity, imagination, and the courage to express ideas. Every young person carries stories, emotions, and perspectives that are unique to their generation. By journaling, blogging, or experimenting with poetry and short stories, they can sharpen their voice and learn how words shape thought. Writing also gives youth the power to question, to dream, and to connect with others—skills that can grow into lifelong habits of creativity and critical thinking.